

# The affective economy of transnational surrogacy

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## Abstract

The booming business of global surrogacy has come to a halt: one surrogacy hub after the other has started to regulate the incremental flow of intended parents to the Global South hoping to fulfill their desire for a baby with the help of a foreign surrogate laborer. Thailand and Nepal have banned surrogacy altogether; India and Mexico insist on the altruistic nature of their surrogacy arrangements. As the drive for altruistic surrogacy suggests, the baby holds an exceptional position in many societies: ideas about the ‘unique’ maternal bond create public unease about the commercialization of babies in surrogacy markets. Drawing on economic sociology and theories of affect, this paper argues that multiple processes of affective attachment, detachment and reattachment shape transnational surrogacy journeys. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Mexico’s surrogacy industry, the paper studies processes of commodification and decommodification in three instances of market-making: (1) the assignment of value and a price to reproductive laborers’ bodies on the basis of affective postcolonial geographies of beauty; (2) the affective/effective organization of the market encounter through contracts and communication rules and (3) the detachment of the final ‘good’ of the baby from the surrogate laborer. Transnational surrogacy arrangements, the paper concludes, are always forms of partial commodification – no matter whether they are framed as altruistic or commercial – because processes of affective/effective attachment and detachment are fundamental for delineating the intimate boundaries of families that come into life with the assistance of the globally operating surrogacy industry.

## Keywords

The commodification of bodies, geographies of marketization, the global intimate, affective economies, transnational reproduction, surrogacy, Mexico

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## Introduction: on banning baby markets – or trying to detach babies from markets?

In this context of the global debate in which we are immersed, it becomes necessary to regulate gestational surrogacy more thoroughly. The aim of this reform is not to impede a noble medical and scientific cause that *helps* people to *contract* the gestation of a baby and a womb external to its biological parents, but to *prevent the eventual mercantilization* of the *newborn* and guarantee the respect of the superior interest of the child and the *human dignity of the gestating surrogate mothers*. (Núñez Jiménez, 2015: 3; translation and emphasis by authors)

The proposed legislation ensures effective regulation of surrogacy, *prohibits commercial surrogacy* and *allows ethical surrogacy* to the needy infertile Indian couples. The major objectives of the Bill are to regulate surrogacy services in the country, to *provide altruistic ethical surrogacy to the needy infertile Indian couples*, to *prohibit commercial surrogacy* including sale and purchase of human embryos and gametes, to *prevent commercialization of surrogacy*, to *prohibit potential exploitation of surrogate mothers* and protect the rights of children born through surrogacy. (Indian Government, 2016; emphasis by authors)

While the global surrogacy industry has blossomed since the Millennium, recent legislative changes have severely restricted the options for intended parents. The two quotations above stem from recent legislative initiatives to regulate two of the major international surrogacy hubs: India and the state of Tabasco in Mexico. They both follow a similar rationale: the commercialization of surrogacy should be banned and condemned to protect the superior interest of the child and the dignity of the gestating mother. Instead, altruism is promoted as the ethically superior way of carrying out surrogacy in these two jurisdictions, with access restricted to heterosexual couples who are citizens.

After India had banned homosexual couples from contracting an Indian surrogate (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare et al., 2010) and Thailand had closed down its surrogacy industry following the Baby-Gammy scandal (Whittaker, 2016), the state of Tabasco in Mexico appeared as a new hotspot for international and especially gay surrogacy on the global surrogacy landscape (Schurr, 2014b; Schurr and Walmsley, 2014). Public media and political debate in Mexico reproduced images and discourses that portrayed the international surrogacy market in terms of human trafficking (Benvenuta, 2015), exploitation for reproductive services (Bartolini Esparza et al., 2014) and baby selling (FBI, 2011). The recent legal shifts in India (Rudrappa, 2016) and Mexico (Schurr and Perler, 2015) respond to an apparently universal moral outrage about a transnational market that has turned the ‘priceless child’ (Zelizer, 1985) into a good purchased from poor surrogate laborers by wealthier and whiter reproductive consumers.<sup>1</sup> The call for an end to commercial markets aims to detach the baby from the market sphere, re-placing it into the realm of the private, the family and the non-commercial. But how do processes of both commodification and decommodification actually shape transnational surrogacy arrangements? And how do the different actors involved in the process experience and deal with their participation in a highly commercialized surrogacy industry?

Addressing these questions, this paper contributes to the fast-growing body of literature on transnational assisted reproduction (Cooper and Waldby, 2014; Deomampo, 2016; Nahman, 2013; Pande, 2014; Rudrappa, 2015) by studying the multiple processes of attachment, detachment and reattachment between the different parties involved in surrogacy that shape the commodification of bodies in global surrogacy markets. Departing from

Muniesa's (2008: 112) argument that 'attachment and detachment are both crucial processes of economic life' as they facilitate the actual market exchange of a good from producer/seller to consumer, this paper sets off to understand how affective/effective attachments and detachments shape transnational surrogacy arrangements in the 'global intimate' (Pratt and Rosner, 2006). Tracing global flows of affect,<sup>2</sup> we study the making of 'assisted world families' (Hudson, 2017) across geographical borders and via biomedical means. The 'assisted world family' (Hudson, 2017) results from the reorganization of conception, pregnancy and parenthood across national frontiers that is possible thanks to the development of reproductive technologies and their transnational marketization. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2014: 9) concept of 'world families' – on which Hudson's notion of 'assisted world families' is based – serves in this paper to investigate the affective 'turbulences produced by the encounter between proximity and distance' that shape the experiences of those whose reproductive labor and consumption bring such world families into being. In short, we aim to understand how the globalization of reproductive technologies and their markets affects the intimate experiences of family-making.

The paper proceeds by bringing economic sociology's understanding of markets as processes of attachment/detachment into a conversation with Ahmed's (2004a, 2004c) notion of the 'affective economy'. We then analyse how processes of affective attachment and detachment shape (1) the 'qualculation' (Callon and Law, 2005; Cochoy, 2002) in terms of quantitative calculation and qualitative judgement of reproductive laborers' bodies; (2) the organization of market encounters and (3) the 'passivation'<sup>3</sup> (Callon, 2013) of the final 'good', that is, the detachment of the surrogate baby from those who have participated in its (re-)production. The paper concludes by calling for the need to study the long-term relations between the different members of assisted world families to understand the impact of globalization on the intimate lives of reproductive laborers, consumers and children alike.

## **The art of making affective/effective markets**

Commercial transactions of body parts, intimate bodily services and babies are highly contested – as the public and political outrage about surrogacy markets in India and Mexico shows. Describing those goods and services whose commodification is morally and politically disputed as 'contested commodities', Radin (2001) asks what – if anything – is wrong with making bodies available for rent or sale? Philipps (2013: 5) joins this debate by questioning why the commodification of the body should fall into a category of its own, given the remarketing of so much that had already come to be run as public services (e.g. the privatization of public hospitals and schools), and the commodification of so much that had been thought of as non-market (e.g. the commercialization of feeling). Departing from feminist debates on the commodification of the body (Dickenson, 2007; Parry, 2008, 2012; Phillips, 2013; Scheper-Hughes, 2001), we join Radin and Philipps in order to ask: what's new about the current global spread of markets through which reproductive bodies and services are commodified?

In Marxist terms, commodification refers to the process of assigning market value to goods or services that previously existed outside the market. The human body, love, reproduction, kinship or intimacy are things which in the understanding of many Western citizens and scholars should not be for sale. While there is a long history of markets for bodies, as in slavery or sex work, and bodily goods, such as blood transfusion, wet nursing or organ transplants, biomedical innovations and technological developments in the realm of assisted reproduction have resulted in an explosion of bodily commodification – ranging from sex

cell markets to stem cell bioeconomies and commercial surrogacy (Cooper and Waldby, 2014; Parry, 2004, 2015b; Waldby and Cooper, 2008).

For Parry (2012: 215), it is the profound extensification and intensification of trade in human bodies, bodily parts and bodily resources that distinguish current body markets from former times. New biotechnological developments have made it possible to disaggregate human bodily material, to detach it from one body, and then to transport body parts such as sex cells and organs across time and space thanks to new forms of cryopreservation, and to attach them to other artifacts or bodies. Decreasing travel costs, the availability of new communication technologies and the spread of global capitalism, among other things, further facilitate the global commodification of bodies (Greenhough et al., 2015).

Scholars writing about the ‘new commodification frontier’ (Hochschild, 2004) insist that the current marketization of bodies and intimate life has a different emotional quality (Illouz, 2007; Smietana, 2017; Zelizer, 2005). Hochschild (2012: 11) argues that the commercialization of intimate life ‘reach[es] into the heart of our emotional lives, a realm previously more shielded from the market’. For her, the new commodification frontier is about the increasing marketization of our very (Western) understanding of the self through the commodification of our bodies and intimate lives<sup>4</sup> in what she calls a ‘new emotional capitalism’ (Hochschild, 2012: 12). In short, the intensity of the market’s influence on Western consumers’ emotional lives is a pivotal characteristic of the current commodification frontier.

Hochschild (2011: 31) calls for ‘a new scholarship that draws together the commodification, our attachment to and detachment from the things we make and buy’. This paper aims to respond to her call by thinking about how processes of attachment and detachment change when the thing to be bought is a reproductive body part or service. To explore the role of emotions in markets’ processes of attachment and detachment that assist the making of world families, we now bring economic sociology’s understanding of markets into concert with Ahmed’s notion of the affective economy.

### *Getting detached? Economic sociology on the making of markets*

Economic sociology has put forward the idea that ‘attachment and detachment are both crucial processes of economic life’ (Muniesa, 2008: 112). Given that Hennion (2010, 2017: 118) argues in his reflection on how the concept of ‘attachment’ has been discussed in economic sociology that the use of the word attachment ‘amounts to advocating for social inquires made on sensitive matters and things that count for people’, (Hennion, 2017) desires for a child and the intimate practices of (assisted) reproduction seem an interesting example to think about processes of de-/attachment. Even more as he remarks that in its most common meanings, ‘attachment first invokes the relationship of a mother to her young’ (Hennion, 2017: 113). Hennion highlights that the concept is closely linked to the idea of bonding, only that the ‘-ment’ in attachments emphasizes that ‘it has to be made, even if it makes us in return’ (Hennion, 2017: 113). Insisting on the performative process of making, he develops an understanding of attachment as a form of distributed action between the different humans, objects, technologies involved in the making of attachments (Gomart and Hennion, 1999; Hennion, 2015).

One realm in which economic sociologists have studied processes of de-/attachment is the making of markets (Çalışkan and Callon, 2009, 2010; Callon, 1998). Muniesa, among others, proposes to study how people become attached to or detached from each other through economic transactions and how things are successively detached from the person to whom they belong when economic goods change hands. Looking at how something is

transformed into a commodity, economic sociologists and geographers argue, ‘it is necessary to cut the ties between this thing and other objects or human beings one by one. It must be [...] detached’ (Callon, 1999: 189). The transformation into a commodity takes place when a thing is detached from the original owner who, after exchanging the thing for money, does not have any remaining (property) right over it (Muniesa, 2005). It is then attached to its new owner and becomes part of the recipient’s world. Detachment of a thing is crucial for the buyer and the seller to be quits at the end of the transaction. In real market situations, detachment is often combined with multiple processes of reattachment when the purchased commodity is not completely disentangled and seller and buyer remain attached to each other. Berndt and Boeckler (Berndt, 2013; Berndt and Boeckler, 2009, 2011, 2012) – among others – have shown how processes of bordering and spatial ordering matter in these messy processes of attachment and detachment that constitute the making of markets, introducing Callon’s thinking to economic geography already more than a decade ago.

Sociological and geographic approaches to marketization (Berndt and Boeckler, 2009; Çalışkan and Callon, 2009; Callon, 2013; Callon and Law, 2005; Callon et al., 2002; Ouma et al., 2013) have singled out a number of instances of market making in which processes of attachment and detachment play a key role, of which we will focus on the following three:

1. The activation of ‘qualculations’ (Cochoy, 2002) in which a collective of actors (scientists, economists, marketing experts, etc.) makes (quantitative) calculations and (qualitative) judgments about a good. In bodily markets, for example, the assignment of value and a price to specific bodies is highly dependent on affective postcolonial geographies of beauty and white desirability (Schurr, 2017).
2. The organization of the market encounter determines the kind of relationship between the seller, the good and the buyer. It includes the whole spatio-temporal process of attachment and detachment from the first encounter to the time when the good has been detached from the seller and attached to the buyer. The contract, for example, plays a crucial role in organizing the market encounter between reproductive laborers and consumers, as it regulates and restricts the communication between both parties.
3. The ‘passivation’ (Callon, 2013: 25) of goods takes place through detaching the good from all those who have participated in its elaboration, production and profiling. As we will show in the empirical part of this section, this process of ‘passivation’ takes place after birth, for instance, when the baby is handed over to the intended parents and the surrogate laborer dismissed as a reproductive worker.

Socio-technical devices play a key role in mediating the processes of attachment and detachment that shape each of the above-mentioned steps in the marketization of goods and services. Following Callon and Muniesa (2005: 1242), we understand socio-technical devices as technologies that require ‘organizational material devices and [...] embodied competencies’ to function together. Socio-technical devices thus range from social media applications (e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp) to blood tests, donor data bases and contracts. An attachment can be performed through a variety of socio-technical devices such as legal contracts or communication technologies. Detachment is an equally mediated phenomenon and can be enacted, for example, through a payment transfer and a receipt guaranteeing that both parties to a transaction are quits (Muniesa, 2008). Power relations shape bodies’ access to and engagement with socio-technical devices as different bodies are positioned differently in terms of, for example, gender, race, class or sexuality. Yet, socio-technical devices through which affects circulate between differently marked bodies mediate processes of attachment (coming close) and detachment (becoming distant).



### *Feeling attached? Sara Ahmed's affective economy*

We seek to Hennion's work that explored how processes of attachment/detachment are linked to passion to a wide range of affects at play in processes of market making. To do so, we turn to Ahmed (2004c: 11) and her conceptualization of affects as 'attachments' to further advance an understanding of the ways attachments perform market relations. Reflecting in more detail on 'what connects us to this or that' (Ahmed, 2004c: 11) serves in this paper to tease out how processes of attachment and detachment that constitute market transactions depend on the forging and disassociation of affective relations. When Ahmed (2004c: 11) writes that 'attachment takes place through movement, through being moved by the proximity of others', she is interested in understanding how affects align certain bodies with each other, or distance bodies from each other, precisely because certain bodies are read as "'having" certain characteristics' (Ahmed, 2004c: 11) in terms of race, gender, sexuality, class etc. Taking Ahmed to the world of transnational surrogacy, we ask how certain bodies become attached to or detached from each other along the surrogacy journey – often across and through transnational space. We seek to explore the relationship between the affective attachment/detachment of differently marked bodies and the effective realization of the market exchange by the parties involved in surrogacy arrangements (intended parents, surrogates, oocyte vendors, agents or physicians). We argue that for the market exchange to become effective (in the sense that it generates money), the circulation of affect between different bodies, body parts and objects needs to be carefully evoked, managed, controlled and eventually ruptured. But let us first delve deeper into Ahmed's theory of affect and emotion.<sup>5</sup>

Drawing on Marx, Ahmed develops the notion of the affective economy. Arguing that emotions work as a form of capital, she shows how affects accumulate over time, as a form of affective value. While Marx looks at how the passion of the capitalist for more wealth drives the accumulation of capital, Ahmed is interested in understanding how feelings become qualities that seem to reside in objects as their histories of production and circulation are erased. The happy family, for example, is a happy object that works as a point of alignment, one that binds and is binding (Ahmed, 2010: 45). Bodies feel attached to each other when feelings are deposited in the same object. Affective investments in objects may then accumulate value, turning objects into happy or unhappy objects. 'The more happy objects circulate, the more they accumulate affective value' (Ahmed, 2010: 38). In short, signs, objects or bodies increase in affective value as an effect of their movement and circulation between different bodies and objects. We employ Ahmed's notion of the affective economy in the sense that the accumulation of value in global surrogacy arrangements depends on the affective attachment of some bodies to other bodies and objects, as well as on the effective detachment of certain bodies and objects. We argue that the market of surrogacy can only be economically effective – in the sense of generating capital – when it succeeds in forging attachments across physical, cultural, social and emotional distances, while at the same time controlling intensities of attachment in order to facilitate processes of detachment to guarantee and finalize the exchange of the baby in the market encounter.

Spatial proximity and distance play key roles in Ahmed's work. While she often talks about physical bodily contact, she emphasizes that bodily proximity is not required to create an impression on others. For her, 'globality becomes a form of attachment' (Ahmed, 2004b: 38) in which the bodies of others are felt and read as being 'like me' or 'not like me' across a distance. In virtual communities, proximity does not require physical co-presence, as the screen becomes the substitute for the skin as a space of contact. New communication and information technologies, ubiquitous air travel (for some) and inexpensive phone rates all

tend to question the spatiality of (intimate) attachments and to facilitate transnational forms of intimacy and collective alignment. Stating that ‘globality is an effect of the movement and circulation of some bodies, images and objects and not others’, Ahmed (2010: 38) hints at the uneven geographies that are also at the core of Pratt and Rosener’s (2006) concern with the global intimate. Responding to their question about feminism’s role in qualifying ‘what can seem like a breathless celebration of body-technology assemblages by those who write within the affective turn’ (Pratt and Rosner, 2006: 15), this paper will now explore how affects circulate within global surrogacy markets, turning reproductive bodies, body parts and services into commodities through affective/effective detachments and attachments.

Based on ethnographic research on the emergence and expansion of the Mexican surrogacy market conducted by Carolin between 2013 and 2016,<sup>6</sup> we analyse in the following how differently racialized, classed, gendered and sexualized bodies get attached, deattached and reattached throughout the transnational surrogacy journeys in which they take part. We will show this by teasing out how in (1) mechanisms of ‘qualculation’, in (2) the organization of market encounters and in (3) the ‘passivation’ of the final good, different bodies have different capacities to become affectively/effectively attached to and detached from other bodies.

## **Making global surrogacy markets through multiple processes of attachment, detachment and reattachment**

*(1) ‘She Is Our Most In-demand VIP Donor in Our Online Database’: affective/effective ‘Qualculations’ of reproductive laborers and their bodies*

I (Carolin) am sitting with eight gay men I had all met before in Mexico over dinner in a restaurant in Barcelona when they start discussing ‘their donors’. Cell phones are passed around with the portraits of the donors – the genetic mothers of their future babies. ‘I like that she looks so naughty in the picture, she must be fun – she reminds me a lot of my sister’, says Juan. ‘We chose the same gorgeous Italian girl as Roberto, we think it is great that his baby and our baby will be half-siblings’ comments Paul, presenting his ‘Italian girl’ in her bikini on his iPhone. ‘What donor did you choose?’ asks Paul Manuel, who has just started his journey. ‘We went for a Mexican one, or rather from the Mexican program because she is quite white anyway. Dr. Arias said that she is their most in-demand very important person (VIP) donor in their online database’. (fieldnote, Barcelona, May 2015)

Sitting there, swiping pictures of beautiful women on the men’s iPhones, I (Carolin) could witness the men’s excitement about these women. They were distant and yet very close to us, dislocated but among us at the same time. The uniform white background of the pictures with the logo of the egg donor agency did not allow one to actually locate the women. Google Picture search, I was later told, however, makes it possible to find the Facebook profiles of the supposedly anonymous ‘donor’.

The women were close to the nine of us seated around the dinner table, because, when I was looking at and listening to the intended fathers, I could sense how they were imagining the features of their future children’s faces, their characters and their moods, when looking at ‘their’ donor. Affects of anticipation, admiration and love were circulating among us, mediated by the pictures on their smartphones.

I found the situation irritating and fascinating at the same time that these gay men were staring at the pictures of highly sexualized women. Irritating, because it reminded me of men

skimming through online dating platforms or pornographic magazines. Fascinating, because they were gay men and hence my feminist heteronormative critique of the masculine gaze became somehow irrelevant. Another aspect that irritated me: the intended parents attached many emotions to these anonymous oocyte laborers on the pictures, while talking little about those women in Mexico who, thousands of miles away, were carrying their babies and whom they had all met when signing their contracts. None of the men shared pictures of ‘their’ surrogate laborer that night. During these early stages of the pregnancies, these intended parents felt more attached to the oocyte laborer than to the surrogate laborer.

Perhaps the fact that they had spent weeks choosing ‘the perfect egg donor’, while the surrogate had been assigned to them by the agency, might explain their different affective investments in their relationship with their oocyte donor as compared to their surrogate. Affects stick to the egg donors’ pictures as signs of love for the future surrogate children. Affects circulate between the intended parents’ own bodies and those of their future children through the portrait of the ‘donor’. It is the perceived sameness between their own bodies and those of their oocyte laborers that moves them closer to those laborers than to the racially more distant surrogate laborers.<sup>7</sup> In the Mexican surrogacy industry, ‘the egg donors are beautiful women, middle class, with some education’, while ‘the surrogates are on average poorer, more *chapparitas* (shorter, darker-skinned women)’ (interview surrogate agent, Villahermosa, September 2014). This racialized affective valuation of bodies is a telling characteristic of the thoroughly racialized surrogacy industry (Deomampo, 2016; Harrison, 2016; Schurr, 2017).

The scene Carolin recalls, however, is also revealing with regard to processes of ‘qual-culation’ in the surrogacy industry. The bodies of the reproductive laborers – the oocyte and surrogate laborers – are the main ‘goods’ to be ‘qualculated’ in the market, as the health, genetics and character of the final commodity, the baby, depends on their genetic input and gestational labor. As the scene reveals, the reproductive ‘consumers are just as active as the other parties involved’ (Callon et al., 2002: 201) in the surrogacy industry in qualifying the ‘goods’ to be purchased through their judgment and evaluation. Parry (2015a) has shown powerfully how different metrics of pedigree and devices such as advanced donor profiles have enabled US-American sperm to become ‘qualified’ and ‘singularized’, in Callon’s terms, in such a way that it is favourably evaluated and judged as preferable in the global sperm market.

In Mexico’s – dominantly gay – surrogacy market, it is oocytes rather than sperm that are demanded by consumers as one of the intended fathers usually contributes his own sperm for the in-vitro fertilization (IVF) procedure. Consumers, who are majorly white and mostly come from the United States, Spain and other European countries and to a minor degree from other Latin American countries, can choose from three different types of databases: a database of local (Mexican) oocyte donors mostly run by the IVF clinic itself, a so-called VIP database of oocyte donors (featured as beautiful Latinas) who are mostly recruited from national model agencies by the IVF clinic and international databases of so-called travelling donors (mainly coming from the US, South Africa and Eastern Europe) run by internationally operating egg donor agencies.

A ‘normal’ Mexican donor receives about 500 USD (10,000 MXN) of compensation for her oocytes, the Mexican VIP donor more than the twice as much, normally around 1350 USD (25,000 MXN), with international donors receiving up to 10,000 USD for an oocyte donation (interviews with oocyte donor coordinators in Cancún, Mexico D.F. and Puebla, Summer 2014). This translates into differently priced ‘egg donor packages’ for the intended parents. If they choose the first or second option, they will have to pay between 4000 and



6000 USD. For an international donor, intended parents pay 16,000–20,000 USD and often on top of that her travel costs (interview CEO of travelling donors agency, Barcelona, May 2015). Surrogacy packages in Mexico cost between 11,500 and 16,000 USD depending on the agency and the services chosen, whereby the compensation for surrogates ranges between 11,000 and 16,000 USD with higher compensation for second time surrogates and for those carrying multiples (Ehrensperger, 2015).

The databases not only differ with regard to the racialization of the bodies displayed (with skin color becoming increasingly lighter/whiter from the first to the third option) and their respective prices but also with regard to the quantity and quality of information available about a certain oocyte laborer (ranging from motivation letters to pedigree and videos) and the number of tests (blood tests and psychological screening) performed.

Altruism is considered a key assessment criterion for evaluating the qualities of the oocyte laborer. A psychological screening seeks to verify not only altruistic motivation but also the affective capacities of the laborer to detach herself from the oocytes she produces. The psychological testing usually consists of a short interview conducted either by a psychologist who works at the clinic or the person in charge of coordinating egg donors – in most cases nurses. Standardized psychological tests are rare. The psychological testing consists either of an informal interview or of a couple of questions with regard to the donor's perception of oocyte donation at the end of a very extensive questionnaire on her medical history. In the end, the 'gut feeling' of a clinic's personnel often decides whether a person will be included in the database:

Look, the sperm donors, they are young [*chavitos*], students who need the money, they think it is great to be paid for masturbating. But the women are honest, more serious. There are women who are interested in the money, but the majority, and you feel it in the interviews, they do it because they, *si se los mueve*, they put themselves in the shoes of the infertile couple imagining how later in life they desperately would want kids. I see the altruism in most of the cases and these are the donors who are really committed, who follow the protocols, are punctual for their appointments and who return. (interview with psychologist, Mexico D.F., July 2014)

The quotation reveals the power of the altruistic trope saturating egg donation and the way this altruistic framing is thoroughly gendered (see also Almeling, 2007). A good donor is an *affective* donor, an empathetic donor, a donor who can put herself in the shoes of those longing for a child. Such a donor emotionally attaches her own body (parts) to the imagined body of the infertile recipient and, by doing so, becomes an *effective* reproductive laborer who is committed to the process. For the clinic, the effectiveness of the donor – in the sense of her long-term commitment, liability and responsibility – is key for the clinic's economic success. 'You have to make sure the donor finishes the program,' as a doctor explained in an interview (Cancún, August 2014), because the clinic invests a lot of money and time in recruiting, screening and marketing egg donors.

The reproductive laborer and her oocytes are 'qualculated' by combining quantitative assessments of her body (Body-Mass-Index), health (blood work, family medical history) and beauty (skin color, eye color, hair color) with qualitative judgments about her motivation, personality and psychological wellbeing that result in a final judgment about her suitability and worth. A whole set of experts and lay people, ranging from recruiters, nurses, physicians, biologists, photographers and marketing experts, are involved in the process of 'qualculation', using a wide set of devices such as social media platforms for recruitment, blood test devices, packaging devices (extended donor profiles) and databases from which consumers may choose.

As the ethnographic narration shows, the consumers actively participate in the process of ‘qualculation’ as they rate, prioritize and pick certain oocyte laborers. Their consumer choices work as a feedback loop which clinics and agencies then take into account when recruiting new oocyte laborers. While this section has looked at processes of de/attachment in the way oocyte donors’ reproductive labor is ‘qualculated’, the next section turns to the market encounter between surrogate laborers and intended parents to understand ways in which economic transactions take place in the transnational surrogacy market.

*(2) ‘We Wanted It Purely Transactional, but Ended Up with a Very Close Relationship’: the affective/effective organization of the market encounter*

‘I tried to talk to our surrogates today when we all met in the notary’s office to sign the contract, but it seemed they were rather uncomfortable. They were very nervous. They were nice, very young; they seemed sweet and happy to do this for us. I mean, we have little in common with them, we approached them, we asked about their kids, but it was rather difficult to really develop a conversation [...]. I followed your advice and gave her my number – just in case so that she can contact me. Raul didn’t, he thinks it is better to follow the agency’s instructions’. I could feel that the three intended fathers were quite agitated when recounting their first encounter with ‘their’ surrogates. They repeatedly insisted that they did not know ‘whether the surrogates or we have been more nervous’, that it was ‘a very weird situation, meeting this stranger who will carry your baby’, that they had hoped to have a private word but that ‘the surrogates didn’t speak much with Peter, the representative of the agency, being present’.

(fieldnote, Playa del Carmen, September 2014)

This fieldnote reveals much about the way the market encounter between producers (surrogate laborers), sellers (surrogacy professionals) and buyers (intended parents) is organized in Mexico’s surrogacy industry. First of all, it shows that the contract between these three parties serves as central device to assemble the different actors involved and to define the terms of transaction of the surrogacy process. In contrast to the contract of oocyte donors that regulates the actual detachment and transfer of reproductive tissue from one body to another (via an IVF procedure in the IVF laboratory), the surrogacy contract serves to render the surrogate’s biological capacities that cannot be transferred into an exchangeable and quantifiable entity. In signing the surrogacy contract, both the intended parents and the surrogate laborers agree ‘that the surrogates’ parturient biology can be both (semi-)detached and instrumentalized’ (Cooper and Waldby, 2014: 85).

We learn from the fieldnote that the intended parents feel that they have little in common with the women who will carry their babies. In contrast to Western reproductive consumers in India, Cambodia or Thailand, who have trouble communicating with their surrogates, these Spanish intended parents are actually able to speak directly with the surrogate laborers as due to Spanish colonialism, they share the same language; but they find it difficult to engage the surrogates in a conversation. As Raul highlights, both the intended fathers and the surrogates feel anxious and fearful about the encounter. The fear, however, seems to affect the women’s bodies more than those of the intended fathers. The surrogate laborers seem to shrink back in fear of an intended father whom they might not like, an agent who might expel them from the program, or a lawyer who might defend the rights of the intended parents over their own.

The affective encounter of transnational surrogacy arrangements works to produce two collective bodies, those of the intended fathers and those of the surrogate laborers. These collective alignments, taking place during this first contact, are emblematic for the

transnational surrogacy market as a whole: reproductive consumers often spend more time chatting with other intended parents than with their surrogates. Their bodies align through shared histories of suffering from medical infertility or through experiences as gay men of having restricted access to reproductive rights. Reading the bodies of other intended parents as being ‘like me’ and those of surrogates as ‘not like me’, to speak in Ahmed’s (2004b) words, intended parents move closer to other intended parents. This proximity often does not even need physical co-presence: the collective body of the intended parent community ‘surfaces’ through virtual attachments, through memberships in closed Facebook groups and through Likes of baby pictures and pregnancy updates, forming what Speier (2016: 44) calls ‘virtual biosocial communities’ and what DasGupta and Das Dasgupta (2014: 68) refer to as a ‘cross-border cybernetic “nation” of surrogate clients’.

Similarly, the surrogate laborers become close friends with the women with whom they share their everyday surrogate-lives, living in surrogate housing or waiting for check-ups in the clinic. They communicate via WhatsApp or Facebook groups, ‘meet to have coffee, send baby pictures around and hang out together with our own kids in the park’ (interview with surrogate laborer, Cancún, July 2014). The surrogates become attached to each other by the spatial and emotional proximity of their shared experience of living through a contract pregnancy (often together in a surrogate house far away from their own families).

While some agencies insist that reproductive consumers and laborers meet in person when signing the contract, others offer that the contract may be signed at home in order to save the clients a trip to Mexico. Many of the surrogate laborers interviewed told me that ‘my first contact was through video call when I was two months pregnant, and I only met them personally when the baby was born’ (interview with surrogate laborer, Villahermosa, July 2015). Video calls set up by the agency served as affective/effective devices for the surrogates ‘to relax, as for me it was rather weird that they are a gay couple, because it is not the same thing than seeing a mum and a dad, but when I saw them, I saw that they were very excited, one of them even applauded when he saw my belly’ (interview with surrogate laborer, Villahermosa, July 2015). In this quotation, happiness and joy circulate through the object of the pregnant belly mediated by the video call. The video call creates proximity between the reproductive consumers and laborer through laughter, bodily signs and the words exchanged.

While video calls or following the intended parents on Facebook enable the surrogate laborers affectively to attach themselves to the intended parents, for many of them, the personal encounter is crucial because ‘I had seen him a couple of times with videocall, but now that I finally met him for the very first time in person, now that I could see how he cuddles the baby, I felt much more comfortable. I knew that this person will take care of *my* baby’ (interview with surrogate laborer, Villahermosa, July 2015). While reproductive consumers are often concerned about whether the surrogate laborer will take proper care of *their* babies, it is interesting that, for this surrogate, the main concern is whether the intended father will take proper care of *her* baby. This quotation shows how this surrogate’s process of detachment from the baby is facilitated by witnessing in person how the intended father becomes attached to the baby. Affective attachment to the intended parent is a precondition for the effective closure of the surrogacy arrangement, as it allows the surrogate mother to detach the baby from her own body and attach it to the life of the intended parent.

Half of the reproductive consumers interviewed emphasized that they opted for Mexico precisely because they liked the transactional mode in which surrogacy is handled in Mexico, as Leander, an intended parent from San Francisco, points out:

One thing that we really liked about the Mexican option was that it was handled in a very transactional way. We didn’t meet Isabel until she was five months pregnant. And that was what

we wanted, a more transactional relationship. In California, there would have been expectations that you have an ongoing relationship with the surrogate during and after the pregnancy. We felt that we were not comfortable in bringing someone into our life who is going to be there forever. We wanted it to be just the three of us, and not having another woman in the family we didn't know whether we would like her or not. That's why we wanted a more transactional relationship. But we were not prepared for what an emotional rollercoaster a surrogacy journey can be and how important the contact with Isabel was in the end. (interview with intended father, San Francisco, April 2015)

By not becoming attached to the surrogate laborer through the physical and affective distance maintained in the design of the Mexican surrogacy program, Leander and his partner hoped to produce a clear delineation of the boundaries of their nuclear family. They considered the Mexican program a guarantee against the risk of having a stranger, a strange surrogate, intruding into their lives. It is the fear of the stranger, of the 'affect alien' (Ahmed, 2010) who, against her 'female instinct', is able to give up her baby (Siegl, in-press). The fear of an affect alien who makes emotional demands on one's family results in Leander's urge to move away, to keep a distance from the surrogate laborer. Choosing a *transactional* model of relationship, he hoped for a 'high degree of emotional detachment all around' (Hochschild, 2011: 25). He thought that such a transactional mode would facilitate the process of detachment of the surrogate from the baby and from any potential kinship demands. His ideas about the surrogate agency as an effective detachment device resemble other detachment devices, such as the clearing house, that 'allow for a clear, rapid and definitive termination of trades and the disentanglement of counterparties' (Muniesa, 2008: 137). The transactional nature of the surrogacy, including the mediation of the agency and the exchange of money, so Leander hoped, would allow them affectively/effectively to 'be quits' and to release the intended parents from any emotional indebtedness that might threaten to attach them to the surrogate for the rest of their lives.

The transactional mode that shaped the market encounter of Leander, the intended parent and Isabel, the surrogate laborer fell apart when an unforeseen event happened: the bankruptcy of the US-based surrogacy agency. With the mediating actor that had kept reproductive consumer and laborer at a distance disappearing from the surrogacy arrangement, Leander and Isabel moved closer. The emotional event of being neglected by the surrogacy agency while being eight months pregnant resulted in a lot of anxieties – 'me murió de miedo' – for Isabel. She did not have any contact details for Leander, but what she did was 'to screen the Facebook friends of Maria [the surrogate hostel manager] until I recognized the face of Leander' (interview, Cancún, August 2014). With the help of Google Translate she wrote Leander a Facebook message about the bankruptcy of the agency and her miserable living conditions, being close to giving birth all by herself in a tiny room in Villahermosa. Leander remembers that 'when we heard that Robert had disappeared and taken all our money, we freaked out and we flew down to Mexico to make sure that she is healthy. I thank God that Mexico is so close to San Francisco, we flew down whenever we wanted, it was no big deal, it was the same time zone, Isabel is on WhatsApp, we exchanged text messages, we became very close' (interview, April 2015).

While Mexico seemed distant enough to keep the surrogate out of their life, its proximity now turned into a key asset. The topological proximity was enacted not only through the direct flights and the same time zone but through intensified contact via social media and communication technologies. Feelings of anxiety, care and love circulated between San Francisco and Villahermosa because of and through the surrogate baby in Isabel's womb – often mediated through communication devices such as Facebook and WhatsApp.

The surrogacy journeys depicted in this section reveal the contingency and transformability of the affective relationship between the counterparts over time and space. The virtual space of the internet and social media could potentially open up the possibility of close contact throughout the whole surrogacy process, making affective attachment possible even across spatial distances, in a similar way to when migrants or multi-local families can maintain intimate bonds with their children across global space by means of telecommunication technologies (Longhurst, 2013; Pratt, 2012). The physical distance, though, is often appreciated as a safety zone to delineate the borders of the nuclear family, by avoiding any form of attachment to the surrogate. Physical co-presence and unexpected events, however, often take the intended parents out of their comfort zones, making them move closer, at least temporarily, to their surrogate laborer. Contingencies and emergencies shape the relationships in transnational surrogacy, whereas reproductive laborers and consumers, due to their different positions in global power geometries, have different capacities to determine their own affective investments and attachments. This second empirical section has looked at the way the market encounter between reproductive laborers and consumers is organized, enacted and transformed throughout the surrogacy journey. The third section examines the final step of the transactual process when the baby is detached from the life and body of the surrogate laborer to then become attached to the family life of the intended parents.

(3) *'I Don't Want the Surrogate's Picture Like an Icon of Maria Hanging over Her Bed': the affective/effective passivation of goods*

I don't know, I feel like I want to leave the whole surrogacy world behind. I have un-friended most people I know from our surrogacy journey on my normal Facebook account, Dr. Arias, Petra from the agency, the other intended parents we met in Mexico. [...] I don't know yet whether and when I will tell our daughter about her Mexican surrogate. I know some people have the picture of their surrogate in the nursery. But I really don't want the surrogate's picture like an icon of Maria hanging over her bed. I just want us to be a normal family. (interview with intended mother, Switzerland, January 2017)

Facebook serves as an effective device for Ingrid to affectively detach herself from those who have helped to bring her daughter, Lily, into her life. She thus de-friends the IVF-doctor, the agent and the other intended parents with whom she shared so much time during the two months when she was impatiently waiting for the legal paperwork to be finished before she was finally able to take her daughter 'home'. In doing so, she hopes to leave the surrogate past of her daughter behind and to make her family life resemble that of a 'normal' family. She wants to erase the linkages to those who have helped to 'produce' the baby. The interview quotation reveals her affective investments in the 'passivation' of the surrogate baby, in 'detach[ing] the "good" from all those that have participated in its elaboration', to use Callon's (2016: 29) words.

Yet the surrogate past of Ingrid's daughter Lily haunts her. While Ingrid works hard to effectively detach the surrogate from Lily by erasing her presence in the child's life and bedroom, it is Nancy, the surrogate laborer, who seeks to reconnect with Ingrid and Lily: 'She constantly likes and comments the Facebook baby pictures that I post. But not just that, she asks for more money all the time', tuition money for her children, money to open a small shop or money to access private maternity care for her own baby that followed shortly after Lily was born. Ingrid not only de-friended but also blocked Nancy on Facebook. Nancy, however, simply changed the medium and started to send messages through WhatsApp and SMS.



The case of Nancy and Ingrid shows how difficult the effective detachment in the case of transnational surrogacy can be. Ingrid's efforts, undertaken to disentangle her relationship with Nancy, and Nancy's constant efforts to reconnect with Ingrid, illustrate well that 'the investments required to achieve [the] passivation become more costly and complex when the entities to transform into market goods [...] include living beings' (Callon, 2016: 29). Departing from the case of Ingrid and Nancy, we explore in the following why the 'passivation' of the final 'good' of the surrogate baby becomes often quite a difficult endeavour.

Ingrid has strong feelings about not hanging the surrogate's picture over the baby's bed like the icon of a saint. Ingrid does not want Nancy to play a permanent, saint-like role in Lily's life. Just like Leander, the intended father from San Francisco, she had chosen to carry out the surrogacy in Mexico because she wanted to have a clear transaction; she did not want to 'have the surrogate mess around in my life'. A year after the birth of Lily, Ingrid told Carolin 'I have paid the surrogate a lot of money. I want her to understand that we are done now. She cannot keep on asking for more. We have signed a contract that ends with the birth of the baby'. Highlighting the transactional nature of her relationship when referring to the contract and the exchange of money, she is irritated that Nancy is not following the transactional script that the agency had arranged. The quotation reveals a major shortcoming of most surrogacy contracts in Mexico: namely, that the contracts remain silent about the relationships between reproductive consumer and laborer post-birth. The agencies disappear once the baby is born and the money has been exchanged.

While intended parents like Leander or Ingrid had perhaps hoped that the long distance between their home countries and Mexico would help them to hold the surrogate away from their lives, some surrogates overcome distances and national borders by 'intruding' into their intimate lives by means of communication technologies. It is not just the effective detachment, in the form of physical and virtual detachment from the relationship, that is difficult, but often also the affective detachment. While Ingrid's comment suggests that, for her, the transaction is now closed, she admits that 'I don't have the heart to radically disconnect from Nancy. I had hoped that the money would change her life, that it will help her to start a business. I don't know how they have spent all the money in such a short time, but when she asks for money, I feel an obligation to help her out'. It is this feeling of emotional indebtedness that makes her transfer money to Mexico time and again. As the examples in this section show, the process of detachment that reproductive consumers had hoped would delineate the boundary of their nuclear family after birth is often combined with multiple processes of attachment and reattachment. Even though the contact between reproductive laborers and consumers is, in the long term, often reduced to sending Christmas and birthday cards (interviews with Ingrid, Leander and other intended parents), these small affective gestures keep reproductive laborers and consumers attached to each other over distance and time.

Speculating into the future, we would like to ask how the surrogate child who had once been passively transferred from the surrogate's womb to their future parents might, at some point in her/his life, actively seek to reattach her/his body to the surrogate laborer. Ingrid, like many other intended parents, is still undecided about whether at all, and if so, when she will tell Lily about Nancy. After sending Carolin a recent study that discusses questions of disclosure with regard to egg donation, Ingrid raises the question of disclosure in one of our follow-up phone calls. Listening to her, I (Carolin) can feel what a hard time she has in navigating the competing expert discourses about the healthy parenting of donor-conceived offspring. I feel how she is torn between wanting to have a 'normal family' and taking account of the global circumstances of becoming a family. Disclosure decisions are

contingent, fluid and complex, as they have the potential to challenge affective relations of kinship. After disclosure, the surrogate children might rearrange their affective attachments, seeking the gamete donor or surrogate laborer out with the help of Google, Facebook or the legal documents of the surrogacy process, and detaching – at least temporarily – from the parents with whom they live.

Academic research still knows far too little about the future feelings of surrogate children, but it is easy to imagine that these once ‘global babies’ will travel to Mexico or India to look for their biogenetic and gestational roots. Most of the surrogate laborers in the study were excited about the idea ‘that [my child] will one day knock at my door’ (interview with surrogate laborer, Villahermosa, July 2015). The way in which intended parents like Ingrid or Leander will handle processes of affective/effective attachment and detachment along the life-course of their children will shape the global and intimate connections of their ‘assisted world family’ (Hudson, 2017). But much also depends on the surrogate laborers’ capacities to make their desires effectively to detach or affectively to stay attached to the surrogate baby prevail against the unequal power relations that saturate the global fertility industry. What is for sure is that the once passivacted ‘good’ of the baby will unfold his/her agency, thus insisting on playing an active part in resisting and contesting the commodity status that was once assigned to the baby by politicians, researchers and society alike.

## **Conclusion: intimate desires for assisted world families**

The question of what actually is commodified in surrogacy markets and whether babies and/or the bodies of the reproductive laborers are turned into commodities through the transactions performed is currently not only at the heart of academic research but also at the centre of policy debates as we have outlined in the introduction. In this paper, we have shed light on these questions by looking at three instances of market making in which processes of commodification and decommodification play a crucial role. We have first shown how affective investments of reproductive consumers and their postcolonial imaginaries of beauty shape processes of qualculation – and hence in consequence the commodification – of reproductive laborers’ bodies and body parts in the Mexican surrogacy industry. Second, we have examined how market encounters between surrogate laborers and intended parents are organized, enacted, contested and transformed by the different actors involved. We have revealed how relationships between intended parents and surrogacy laborers often alter over the time of the surrogacy journey between a transactional nature and intense affective investments. Last, we have discussed the complex processes of de- and reattachment at the end of surrogacy transactions and the role of these processes play in becoming a ‘normal’ family and acknowledging the family’s history as ‘assisted world family’ (Hudson, 2017). Departing from Callon’s (1999: 189) insight that ‘to transform something into a commodity, it is necessary to cut the ties between this thing and other objects or human beings [...]. It must be detached’, our empirical analysis has revealed that detachment processes – or the closure of the transaction, the feeling of being quits – are imagined as an important step in reproductive consumers’ journeys to build assisted world families. Spatial and affective distances are considered effective tools to facilitate this difficult process of detaching the baby from the surrogate laborer.

Our data, however, have also shown that processes of detachment are complex, ambivalent manoeuvres that often include multiple forms of reattachment (Callon and Muniesa, 2005; Muniesa, 2008) which contest the closure of the market exchange and hence the commodification of the baby. Admittedly there are cases in our research where reproductive consumers and laborers do not have any form of contact after the baby has passed hands

and the transaction has been closed by means of making the final payment. But even in these cases, the new parents keep on thinking whether and when they will disclose the surrogacy to their child, while the surrogate laborer keeps the picture of the newborn surrogate baby on her smartphone and eventually checks out the pictures on the new parents' Facebook page. Somehow it is – at least for most of the people in our research – impossible to actually erase the surrogacy history of the child, even with the surrogate being thousands of miles away. Processes of commodification are hence never complete. They remain partial and contested, whenever the surrogate laborer insists on remaining in the intimate life of these world families or whenever the child reattaches his/her body at some point in his/her life to his/her surrogate laborer. Whether or not the surrogate baby remains affectively attached to the reproductive laborers depends on the intimate desires of all parties involved with regard to maintaining or cutting the global ties of their assisted world family.

What is problematic are the unequal global power relations that saturate these decisions. For their gendered, sexualized, classed and racialized positions in the global (bio-)economy, reproductive consumers and laborers have quite different capacities to decide on their affective investments in or detachments from the global bonds of assisted world families. Processes of affective/effective detachment – which are a precondition for commodification – shape family-making by means of assisted reproductive technologies in transnational surrogacy arrangements, as they allow the delineation of the nuclear family and the negotiation of the role that reproductive laborers are supposed and want to play in the assisted world families, ranging from a non-existent relationship to (distant) kinship and friendship. To what extent the baby, resulting from transnational surrogacy arrangements is commodified hence depends on the intensity of affective ties between the reproductive laborers and consumers, and on the effective detachment of the baby from his/her reproductive laborers. Hence, it is not the legal framework of the market, be it altruistic or commercial, that defines whether a baby is commodified, but rather the intimate choices of the members of these world families and their demarcating practices. This paper hereby concludes in calling for the need to study the long-term relations between the different members of assisted world families, in order to understand the impact of globalization on the intimate lives of reproductive laborers, consumers and children alike.

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## Notes

1. Using the terms ‘reproductive laborers’ (consisting of surrogate laborers and oocyte laborers) and ‘reproductive consumers’, we deliberately frame surrogacy in terms of labor relations and consumption. As surrogacy arrangements in Mexico start as market encounters rather than as forms of altruism and philanthropy – even though they may include forms of altruism, philanthropy or compensation and may turn into kinship or friendship in the long run –, these terms emphasize the market logics saturating the organization of the global encounter.
2. We follow Rachel Colls (2012) in challenging the distinction between emotions and affects that is propagated especially by geographies of affect and non-representational geographies (McCormack, 2006). As Ahmed (2004b: 39) argues, ‘this model creates a distinction between conscious recognition and ‘direct’ feeling, which negates how what is not consciously experienced may still be mediated by past experiences. [...] Further, emotions clearly involve sensations: this analytic distinction between affect and emotion risks cutting emotions off from the lived experiences of being and having a body’. While we agree with Ahmed that it is impossible to distinguish between emotions and affect, and we question the disciplinary dispute between feminist geographers and non-representational geographies, we take from affect theory not only the conceptualization of affect as a force that circulates between bodies but also its sensitivity to the affective agency of non-human bodies (Schurr, 2014a).
3. While in an original French text Michel Callon uses the word ‘passivation’ (Callon, 2013: 25) to refer to those processes that make it possible for a good to be disentangled from its producer(s), in a subsequent English text, he highlights that it would be preferable to talk of ‘passiv(ac)tion’ (Callon, 2016: 29) to denote a process which detaches the good not only from all those who have participated in its elaboration and profiling but also to ensure that its behaviour is to some extent controllable and predictable with regard to its courses of action. In this paper, we use the French term ‘passivation’ to refer to the process of detachment from the ‘good’ of the baby from the reproductive laborer and surrogacy professionals.
4. Here, it is important not to forget that certain kinds of bodies – in particular non-white and female – have a long history of bodily commodification, if we think about (neo)colonial forms of slavery and trafficking, sex work and forced labor (we thank one of the reviewers for insisting to make this point more prominent throughout the paper).
5. In the afterword to the 2014 edition of *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Sara Ahmed explicitly addresses the relation of her work to the ‘affective turn’, arguing that her work seeks to challenge the distinction between affect and emotion that is often put forward in that context. She highlights the fact that her own attempt to re-theorize emotions includes an ‘analysis of those processes that some have used the term “affect” to describe’ (Ahmed, 2014, 2004: 208). For her, emotions involve ‘bodily processes of affecting and being affected’ (Ahmed, 2014, 2004: 208). We follow her in understanding emotions/affects as showing ‘how we come into contact with objects and others’ (Ahmed, 2014, 2004: 208).
6. The ethnographic research took place in fertility clinics, surrogacy agencies and surrogate housing in Mexico City, Cancún, Villahermosa and Puerto Vallarta, as well as at conferences on and exhibitions of assisted reproductive technologies and surrogacy in Mexico City, Munich, Madrid, Geneva, Barcelona and London (for questions of access and ethics see Schurr and Abdo, 2016). One hundred and sixteen interviews were conducted in these different places with 21 physicians, 5 biologists, 11 psychologists or nurses responsible for egg and sperm donors, 15 agents of reproductive tourism, 10 Chief Executive Officers of surrogacy agencies, 19 intended parents, 21

surrogates and 14 egg donors. The interviews, lasting between 40 minutes and 3 hours, have been recorded, transcribed and analysed using the qualitative data software Maxqda, according to Mayring's (2003) qualitative content analysis.

7. Intended parents were rather indifferent about the surrogate laborers' racialized bodies. In contrast to other contexts such as the US (Harrison, 2016), we did not come across anxieties about non-white surrogates. This might have to do also with the fact that most surrogates in our sample self-identified as mestiza and none of them self-identified as Afro-Latinamerican or indigenous.

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